



HOUSE BILL 477: Four-Year Terms/Town of Bethel.

2019-2020 General Assembly

Committee:	Senate Redistricting and Elections. If favorable, re-refer to Rules and Operations of the Senate	Date:	June 23, 2020
Introduced by:	Rep. K. Smith	Prepared by:	Jessica Sammons
Analysis of:	Third Edition		Staff Attorney

OVERVIEW: *House Bill 477 would do both of the following:*

- *Extend the Town of Bethel's term of office for mayor and commissioners from two-year terms to four-year terms, beginning in 2021.*
- *Abolish the office of coroner in Bladen County, effective on the earlier of a vacancy in the office of coroner or the expiration of the current elected term of office. S.L. 2020-21 abolished this office, effective January 1, 2021.*

[As introduced, this bill was identical to S198, as introduced by Sen. D. Davis, which is currently in Senate Rules and Operations of the Senate.]

TOWN OF BETHEL MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

CURRENT LAW: The Town of Bethel is located in Pitt County, and has a population of 1,577. The Charter of the Town of Bethel provides that officers for the Town consist of a mayor and five commissioners, elected at-large for two-year terms.

Municipal elections in the Town are conducted in odd-numbered years on a nonpartisan basis, and the results are determined using the plurality method in G.S. 163-292. Election for mayor and commissioners are held on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November. G.S. 163-279. Terms of office for both the mayor and commissioners begin on the first Monday in December following their election.

BILL ANALYSIS: Section 1 of House Bill 477 would amend the Charter of the Town of Bethel to extend the term of office for the mayor and commissioners from two years to four years, effective with the 2021 election. From 2021 on, municipal elections in the Town would be held every four years.

ELIMINATE BLADEN COUNTY CORONER.

CURRENT LAW: Chapter 152 of the General Statutes sets out the duties of elected county coroners in the State. From 1965-67, several local laws were enacted providing for the appointment of medical doctors as county medical examiners, and abolishing the office of coroner in several counties. In 1967, the General Assembly enacted S.L. 1967-1154, which established the State Office of Chief Medical Examiner, to provide for a Statewide system for postmortem examinations of deaths related to crimes, suicide, prison

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confinement, or other specified circumstances. Since the 1960s, the office of elected county coroner has been abolished in most counties.

S.L. 2020-21, House Bill 1157, abolished the elected office of coroner in four counties: Avery, Bladen, Hoke, and Yadkin, effective January 1, 2021.

BILL ANALYSIS: Section 1.5 of House Bill 477 would abolish the office of the coroner in Bladen County, upon which Chapter 152 of the General States would not apply to Bladen County.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Effective on the earlier of a vacancy in the office of coroner or the expiration of the current elected term of office.